



LIFE IN THE FAST LANE

By Randy Hardy, Interim Pastor

Let me begin by saying, "Thank you!" It is an honor to be here at the Cleveland Church of Christ serving the congregation as your Interim Pastor. Laura and I have been blessed in so many ways by your prayers and encouragement over the past four months.

Over 21 years ago, the Cleveland Church of Christ formed a Search Committee to choose a new pastor. The congregation turned to God in fervent prayer, seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit in making a decision that would have an impact on this church, community, and surrounding area for a generation. At the same time, a godly young man by the name of David Kester was seeking the face of the Heavenly Father, who hears and answers our prayers. And our Father, in His wisdom, brought the right man to the right place at the right time. He will do it again to the praise of His glory.

During morning worship on Sunday, February 15th, I stood before the congregation and asked those present to join together in prayer and fasting as the Search Committee has reached a crucial time in the process of selecting our next pastor. We have narrowed the field of candidates and are ready to begin interviewing. From the very beginning, the Search Committee has asked you to be in prayer for us and the candidates we are considering for the position. We want you to realize that we all have an important role in the selection of our new pastor.

I want to further elaborate on my words on fasting for both those that were present that day and those that were not there to hear. The words *fast* and *fasting* are used about 75 times in the Bible. About two-thirds of the occurrences are in the Old Testament and one-third in the New Testament. Throughout Scripture, in both the Old and New Testaments, fasting is described as a natural response in times of crisis, mourning, or deep need. At critical times in the life of God's people, leaders have called for fasting to intensify the efforts to seek God's will and discern His direction. Fasting signifies that we are serious about this matter. Fasting emphasizes our need; it says, "Look here!" like when we spotlight our words with a highlighter, by underlining, or using exclamation points.

In Acts 13:1-3, Luke writes, "Now there were at Antioch...prophets and teachers. And while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart from me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away." The situation here is that Saul (Paul) and Barnabas and some of the other leaders in the church in Antioch were fasting to seek the leading of the Holy Spirit in the direction of their mission. They were seeking an answer to the question, "Where do we go from here as a church?"

Many of the questions that individuals and churches have to answer are of that kind. There are guidelines in the Scriptures that help us know the qualifications that a pastor must possess. There is no chapter or verse to turn to for the specific answer we are looking for. However, that doesn't mean that we are simply left on our own without any Divine help.

From this story in Acts, we see that fasting proved to be an occasion for the Spirit's special guidance. Verse 2 says, "And while they were...*fasting*, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart from me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'" Luke clearly wants us to see a connection between the worship, prayer, and fasting on the one hand and the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit on the other.

Fasting is not a technique to manipulate God into doing our will, nor is it a spiritual way to lose weight. Rather, fasting is the self-denial of normal necessities and habits in order to intentionally be with our heavenly Father, offering Him the time and attentiveness we might otherwise be giving to eating and other activities.

I want to conclude with some guidelines, or suggestions, on how to proceed...

1. Make your commitment.

- Pray about the kind of fast you should undertake and for how long.
- One suggestion is to begin your fast in the evening after supper and continue until supper the next day.
- If you choose not to fast from food, there are other things to abstain from such as watching TV, shopping, cell phones, computer games and email, and reading the newspaper, etc.

2. Prepare yourself spiritually.

- Repent from and confess your sins – receive God's forgiveness (1 John 1:9).
- Surrender your life fully to Jesus Christ (Romans 12:1).
- Fast with a humble attitude, not to be seen by others (Matthew 6:16-18).
- Expect spiritual opposition from Satan (1 Peter 5:8).

3. Plan your time set apart for fasting.

- Bring your Bible and a glass of water or juice.
- Place yourself in the presence of God. Offer yourself and your time to God.
- Spend some time worshiping God for His faithfulness.
- Bring your desires to God.

We must be passionate and earnest in the pursuit of God's will for our church. Fasting awakens and stirs a hunger for the presence and power of God in our midst. God sees us fasting. He sees that we have a deep longing that is drawing us to fast. He sees that our heart is not seeking the ordinary pleasures of human admiration and applause. He sees that we are acting not out of strength to impress others with our discipline, but out of weakness to express to God our need and our great longing that He would act for His glory. And when He sees this, He responds. He acts.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS for MARCH 2009

All events are at the church building unless otherwise noted.

* Indicates an article is elsewhere in this newsletter.

- Movie Night – March 1
- Bible Study – March 4*
- Minnesota Christian Convention, St. Cloud – March 6-7*
- Father/Daughter Purity Ball, Mankato – March 7*
- Daylight Saving Time Begins – March 8*
- Building Offering – March 8
- Dorcas Fellowship – March 10
- Church Board Meeting – March 10
- Bible Study – March 18*
- April Newsletter articles due – March 19
- Ladies Nite Out, Mexican Village
– March 19*
- 30-Hour Famine for 7th -12th Youth
– March 20-21*
- Spaghetti Feed – March 21*
- Movie Event 2 showings – March 29*

COMING IN APRIL 2009

- Good Friday Service – April 10*
- Easter Sunday Breakfast – April 12*
- Easter Sunday Worship Service – April 12*
- College Days at Crossroads College – April 16-17
- Christian Student Fellowship here for a retreat – April 17-19
- Fellowship/Potluck Dinner – April 19
- Women's Conference, Rochester – April 24-25
- Praise and Prayer Meeting – April 26
- 7th-12th Youth Meeting – April 26



WEDNESDAY NIGHT BIBLE STUDY Everyone & Anyone Is Welcome

We have been studying "*Beginning Life Together*" on God's purpose for your life. The evening includes a short video presentation, Bible study, discussion and prayer. Please join us at the church on Wednesday, March 4 & 18 at 6:30pm.

MINNESOTA CHRISTIAN CONVENTION

Do You Need Renewal in Your Life...

Purpose, Community, Joy, Passion, Faith, Vision, Hope, Walk with Christ ???

Come and celebrate our 2009 theme "**GOD OF RENEWAL**" at the Minnesota Christian Convention on March 6 & 7, 2009, at the St. Cloud Civic Center in St. Cloud, MN. The annual event is really THREE conventions in one! The **ADULT CONVENTION** has Mike Kilgallin, President of Crossroads College, as its featured speaker for the main sessions. Workshops covering a variety of topics are also scheduled. It is a great opportunity for

convention goes to connect with Crossroads College, MCEA, Pine Haven, and many brothers & sisters in Christ. The **TEEN CONVENTION** will feature SNO-FEAST, "Fireside," and time on "Faith Means DO." The **CHILDREN'S CONVENTION** for kids from ages 4 - Grade 6 has age appropriate classes, games, fun and snacks. A **NURSERY** is provided for the entire Convention for infants through 47 months. The Minnesota Christian Convention website at <http://www.mnconvention.org/> has complete information, including downloadable forms. Also, our church bulletin board has posted convention details, including registration information and housing possibilities.

FATHER / DAUGHTER PURITY BALL 2009

Date/Time: Saturday, March 7, 2009 – 5:00-10:00pm

Place: Alltel Center, 1 Civic Center Plaza, Mankato, MN

Daughter's age: 12 years and older **Attire:** Formal / Semi Formal **Cost:** Tickets \$40

Information: Call (507) 327-7047; email purityball@myclearwave.net; website www.purityballmn.org

WHAT IS A PURITY BALL?

This Christ-centered event is designed to encourage and support the father/daughter relationship, facilitate discussion and prayer, strengthen their relationship and provide them with an avenue to commit themselves to living a pure life. This special evening will also entertain, educate and provide them with life-long memories.

DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME

Daylight Saving Time has rolled around again! In order to be on time for worship on Sunday, March 8, set your clocks ahead one hour on Saturday evening, March 7.

LADIES NITE OUT

Once a month, on the third Thursday of each month, ladies of all ages gather in one of the area eating establishments at 6:00 p.m. for a meal and fellowship. On Thursday, March 19 at 6:00pm, we will eat at Mexican Village on Madison Avenue in Mankato. Come and enjoy a fun time of visiting with someone else do the cooking! Ladies from inside and outside our congregation are welcome to join in this activity.

30-HOUR FAMINE

Youth in grades 7-12 will be participating in World Vision's 30-Hour Famine March 20-21. After eating lunch on Friday, the kids will not eat again until Saturday evening. The young people should gather at the church, Friday, March 20, at 6:00pm (or as soon as they can arrive) for the group events of the famine and an overnigher.

The 30-Hour Famine is an international youth movement coordinated by WORLD VISION. One of the main goals of the 30-Hour Famine is to provide food, agricultural education and sources of income for poverty-stricken children and their families. For more information, please visit their website at: www.30hourfamine.org or www.worldvision.org.

WHAT TO BRING WITH YOU:

A sleeping bag, pillow, non-electronic games,* towel, toiletries, a change of clothes, and warm clothes for outside activities, if the weather permits. Also, bring your favorite beverages to drink during the famine with milk, juice, and hot chocolate being better choices than pop. Soups are not allowed.

*Please leave ALL electronics at home.

We encourage you to bring friends. Sign your name and your friends' names on the sign-up sheet on the foyer table at church if you plan to attend. Make sure your friends know what to bring!

In conclusion, the "Faminers" will be hosting a **SPAGHETTI FEED for their families, friends and the church family** at the church on Saturday, March 21, 4:00-6:30pm. Donations given will go to World Vision. For more information, contact Gary or Deb G.

MOVIE EVENT on SUNDAY MARCH 29

Come to one or both of our showings of the movie **FIREPROOF** on Sunday, March 29. Show times are 1:00pm and 6:30pm. Admission is free and the popcorn is free. Come with a friend or two to watch this inspirational film.

ABOUT THE MOVIE

From the creators of **FACING THE GIANTS** and **FLYWHEEL** comes the movie **FIREPROOF**. With hope-filled, heartfelt storytelling, the moviemaking ministry of Sherwood Baptist Church of Albany,

Georgia continues to touch the world. FIREPROOF is an action-packed love story. Expect to be laughing, crying, and inching toward the edge of your seat as you are drawn into the world of a firefighter, his wife ... and a marriage worth rescuing. "At work, inside burning buildings, Captain Caleb Holt lives by the old firefighter's adage: Never Leave Your Partner Behind. At home, the Captain lives by his own rules. His job at work is to rescue others. Now Caleb Holt is ready to face his toughest job ever...rescuing his wife's heart."

EASTER 2009

We are in a season of remembrance for as we approach Easter. We encourage you to pick up a copy of a special 4-week *Easter Edition* of *Our Daily Bread*, a devotional guide, in the foyer area at church. Beginning on Monday, March 16, for just a few minutes each day, you can read articles selected especially for the Easter season.

2009 Easter Services at church will be:

- April 10 - Good Friday Service at 7:00pm (includes the Lord's Supper)
- April 12 - Easter Sunday Breakfast at 8:45-9:45am (no Sunday Bible classes)
 - Easter Sunday Worship Service at 10:00am (note the special time)

CLOTHING DRIVE

In an effort to give back to the community, we are planning a clothing drive. Please donate **good** used clothing to be given to those in our congregation and the surrounding community. Our first distribution will be in the spring of 2009. Adult and children's clothing are welcome but children's clothing is especially coveted. Start collecting items now. A day will be announced when they can be dropped off at the church building. We will also need individuals to help sort the clothes and to display them for the distribution. Contact Mary Howells for further information.

SUMMER CAMP 2009 SCHEDULE PINE HAVEN CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLY

Based on grades going into Fall 2009

Cleveland is in Zone A = Z.A

May 14-16	Work Weekend
June 14-20	11th and 12th
June 21-27	9th and 10th Z.A
June 28-July 4	Family Week
July 17-19	Mature Adult
July 24-26	Ladies Retreat
July 26-Aug 1	7th and 8th Z.A
Aug 9-14	5th and 6th Z.A
Aug 14-16	Motorcycle Weekend
Aug 16-19	4th Grade
Aug 20-23	Family Weekend
Sept 4-7	Last Chance Camp
Sept 10-13	Scrapbook Weekend
Sept 17-20	Scrapbook Weekend

EARLY BIRD SPECIAL FOR SUMMER YOUTH CAMPS

If you register for a PHCA youth camp by May 1, 2009, your registration fee will be \$10.00 off the registration fee price listed on the registration form. For example: If camp fee is listed as \$150.00, if you register before May 1, 2009, the Early Bird fee is \$140.00 for that youth camp session.

Beginning very soon, you can download a registration form to mail in or register online at www.pinehavencamp.org. Registration forms will also be available at church by late March. Any dollar amount can be sent in as a deposit with your registration form.

GOD BLESS YOU, BILL & NANCY

Long time church family members, Bill & Nancy Cox, moved to Austin, Minnesota in February. God blessed them with the sale of their rural Cleveland home including their apple orchard. We will miss seeing them often, but wish them the very best in their new home. Their mailing address is: Bill & Nancy Cox, 200 - 19th Street SW, Austin, MN 55912. Their phone numbers are (home) 507-433-1639 and (cell) 507-351-2917. They also have email: bncoxs@netzero.net.

WEBSITE NEWS

Since the beginning of 2009, almost 200 new pictures have been added to our church website. Included in that number are more 2008 VBS pictures, the 2008 New Orleans mission trip, the old church building exterior since we sold it, and some 2009 pictures. Go to www.clevelandchurch.net, click on "Pictures" on the left side menu, and follow the links from there. Enjoy!

SEARCH COMMITTEE UPDATE by Wayne F, Cleveland Church Elder

The search committee members are Jolene C, Sandy K, Graydon D, Laura D, Mark H, and Wayne F. Randy Hardy is an ex-officio member as an advisor. This committee has met several times in an effort to do the best job possible in bringing a nomination for a new equipping minister here to Cleveland.

First, we tried to determine what kind of congregation we are and what our most important needs are. Then we looked at what we thought the qualities of a minister should be to suit our needs. After these steps, we prepared letters and advertisements to be published on the websites of the various institutions in our brotherhood and the Christian Standard magazine. We also wrote letters to persons who we thought might be a good fit for us at Cleveland. Because of these efforts, we have received 23 resumes from various people throughout the country.

Our next step was to review these resumes and pick out those who we thought would best fit our congregation. Now we are starting the interview process. We have interviewed one person and a second one is scheduled. Until we have interviewed them, we do not think it appropriate to reveal their names.

In all of this process, we have asked God to guide us. We ask that each member keep this matter uppermost in his /her prayers.

2009 CHURCH FAMILY GRADUATES

If you, or a family member from our Cleveland church family, are graduating this spring from high school or college, please tell our church secretary Lisa. We would like to know from what school you are graduating, when you graduate and your degree & major, if graduating from college. If you graduated between summer 2008 and now, we would also like to hear from you.

OUR PRAYER CHAIN

Prayer is an important ministry of the church. As of this print, nearly 50 family units are involved in our prayer chain to pray for you and yours as special needs arise. **TO SUBMIT A PRAYER REQUEST**, either call or email: Betty L 507-931-5947 (leave a message); prayerchain@clevelandchurch.net

SNACKS NEEDED for the 10:00am Sunday Fellowship Time. Sign up on the list on the church kitchen counter. Bring 6-8 dozen snack items. Volunteers are responsible for setting up, serving and cleaning up on your service day.

BIRTHDAYS: March 2– Sage A, Darlene S; 5– Tom E, Maggie S; 10– Frank H, Ryan R; 14– Jordan P; 15– Dayton H, Babu Samuel (missionary in India); 16– Wendy E, Kaylin S; 18– Helen B, Mercy Samuel (wife of missionary in India); 20– Liz R; 24– Neysa S; 25– Samantha B, Stephanie B; 26– Mark C; 28– Jordan G; 29– Elsa E; 30– Kole S

ANNIVERSARIES: March 10– Lowen & Dorothy R, 18– Dan & Jolene C

CHURCH OF CHRIST
900 State Highway 99
Mail to: PO Box 307
Cleveland, MN 56017

OUR HEAD: Jesus Christ
INTERIM PASTOR: Randy Hardy

ALL SUNDAYS unless noted otherwise

8:45am Pre-JAM Fun for all ages
9:00am JAM Sessions = Bible Classes
10:00am Fellowship Time
10:30am Worship Service

www.clevelandchurch.net

OFFICE PHONE: (507) 931- 5924
OFFICE/GENERAL: office@clevelandchurch.net
PRAYER CHAIN: prayerchain@clevelandchurch.net
SECRETARY Lisa Koppelman: lisa@clevelandchurch.net

If you wish to no longer receive our email newsletters **OR** to update your email address, please reply to this address: newsletter@clevelandchurch.net

Thank you,
Church of Christ Meeting at Cleveland, Minnesota